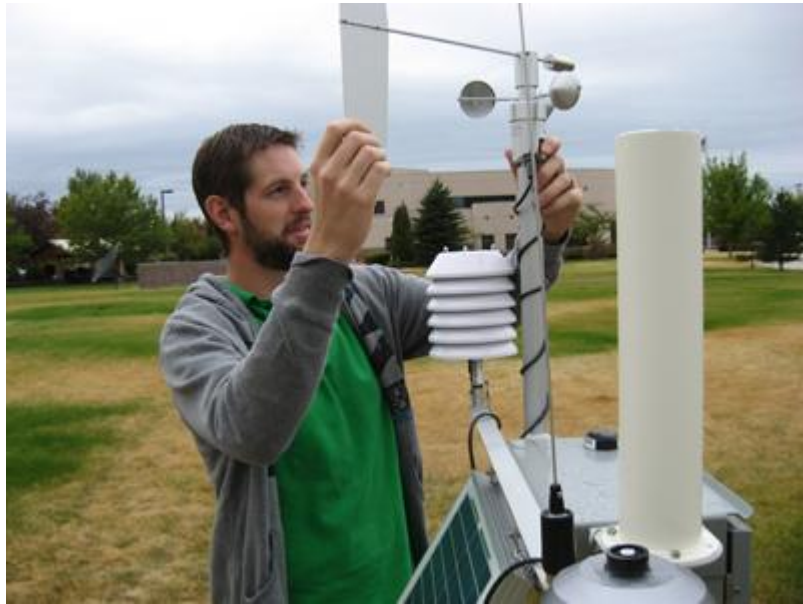




Bureau: Bureau of Land Management

## **BLM Giving New Meaning to Veteran Fire Crews**

With U.S. involvement in foreign conflicts winding down, many members of the Armed Forces are contemplating careers after their time in uniform comes to an end. President Obama expressed his personal commitment to recognizing and helping returning veterans in a 2009 Executive Order, which calls for the administration to lead by example in promoting employment opportunities for recent-era veterans.



K.C. Shedden is a recent-era veteran hired in 2010 to work at the Remote Automated Weather Sensing program at NIFC. The BLM is creating three fully staffed fuels reduction and fire management crews staffed by recent-era veterans — young men and women like Shedden who want to work in a natural resource career. Photo by Don Smurthwaite, BLM.

The Bureau of Land Management is doing its part. “BLM Fire and Aviation sees an incredible opportunity to bolster our firefighting crews with returning veterans,” said Tim Murphy, BLM assistant director for Fire and Aviation. “Veterans as physically fit, motivated people who are used to working in team configurations. They’re comfortable working outdoors in rugged and sometimes hazardous settings. They make a natural fit as wildland firefighters, and we’re eager to step up our support of returning veterans.”

BLM is connecting with recent-era veterans by creating three 20-person hazardous fuels reduction crews in 2012. The crews will provide BLM with a skilled, mobile and mission-oriented workforce. Veterans are highly productive and quick learners. The work they accomplish for the BLM will reduce the threats of wildfire and benefit wildlife habitat. Further, the training and experience participants amass will benefit those who choose to pursue careers in natural resource management.

The crews’ purpose is two-fold. First, the crews will engage in fuels treatment work designed to reduce hazardous fuel accumulations in strategic areas — usually on BLM lands adjacent to communities and other populated areas. Second, during the peak months of the western fire season, the crews’ emphasis will shift to local, regional and national fire suppression work. The crews will be staffed by veterans and led by experienced wildland fire specialists.

The three crews will be based in Klamath Falls, Ore.; El Dorado Hills, Calif.; and Las Vegas, Nev.

The crew locations have been selected strategically — based on the hosting units' proximity to military installations, wildland fire occurrence trends, and fuels reduction workloads. In addition to Oregon, California and Nevada, several other states are making plans to start similar crews next year.

**By: Kenneth Frederick, BLM Fire and Aviation, NIFC**  
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